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THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

By LOUISA FLETCHER

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THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

BY
LOUISA FLETCHER
(MRS. WILLARD CONNELLY)



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THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

I wish that there were some wonderful place
 Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
 And all of our poor, selfish grief
Could be dropped, like a shabby old coat, at the door,
 And never put on again.

I wish we could come on it all unaware,
 Like the hunter who finds a lost trail;
And I wish that the one whom our blindness had done
 The greatest injustice of all
Could be at the gates, like an old friend that waits
 For the comrade he's gladdest to hail.

We would find all the things we intended to do
 But forgot, and remembered — too late,
Little praises unspoken, little promises broken,
 And all of the thousand and one
Little duties neglected that might have perfected
 The day for one less fortunate.

It wouldn't be possible not to be kind
 In the Land of Beginning Again;

THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

And the ones we misjudged and the ones whom we
grudged

Their moments of victory here
Would feel in the grasp of our loving handclasp
More than penitent lips could explain.

For what had been hardest we'd know had been best,
And what had seemed loss would be gain;
For there isn't a sting that will not take wing
When we've faced it and laughed it away;
And I think that the laughter is most what we're after
In the Land of Beginning Again!

So I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
And all of our poor, selfish grief
Could be dropped, like a shabby old coat, at the door,
And never put on again.

MANDARIN RED

I am the color of audacity,
Of rhythmic tribal dance, of tropic love.
I am that tint released upon the air
When cymbals kiss, or comets meet above

I am the color of a twanging lilt
Played underneath a Spanish windowledge.
I am a sudden born when these are wed:
A braggart's laughter and a coquette's pledge.

Look for me in the lanterned nights of June,
Swinging by flimsy wires to fruit the dark
That lovers seek at rustic festivals,
Deep orange bubbles floating in the park.

Look for me when you read a page of Kim,
Drink of me when you hear Chanson Indoue,
Know me one rapturous instant, when the wing
Of tanager beats flame into the blue.

I am the blood that leaps in Harlequin,
The pulse of all things riotous and fleet.
A deal of me, and you have carnival;
A little — and the heart must skip a beat!

STRIFE'S END

My house is hushed, its doors are fast,
He whom my soul desired has come.
I dwell with him in quiet there,
The pallid loneliness is past.

The day of bartering is through.
Harsh echoes of the traffickers
Have fled, and in exchange have left
The deep tranquillity of two.

Into a rest my soul has slipped.
Ceased is the come and go of feet,
The visit of this friend and that;
Unpledged the flagons once they lipped.

The give and take of speech is spent,
Its hundred petty wounds are staunch'd;
Profound and healing is the night,
My spirit broods upon content.

I watch within my placid home
The soft flames rising from the hearth.
I tend with endless joy that fire;
He whom my soul desired has come.

DEBUSSY

Musical malcontent!
Weaver of ecstasies that end in pain!
Lover of contrasts, with a soul of scorn
For maudlin melody sustained and tame!
Mischievous unrelenting conjurer
Of wraiths so elementally opposed
That all the air is filled with captured cries
Of joy and grief!
Miner of dissonances rich with gold
As tumbled quartz, swift riv'd by pick and sluice!
Distiller of strange decoctions
For those two inseparable insatiates
That eternally linger,
Contentedly sprawling,
In the tavern of Everyman's soul —
The deep-drinking wassailer who feels,
And his fellow-wassailer who thinks.

Painter of chimes on the wind!
Of cloud shadows on lakes,
Of forests that murmur in their sleep,
Of swaying branches interlocked,
Of leaves that kiss, trembling,
And kiss again!

DEBUSSY

Mariner of wild seas and haunted shores!
Disdainful of safe harbors where the waves
Are tiny and monotonous, and purged
As clean and tasteless as the bone-white beach,
You plunge your silver prow into the swell
Of heaving giant breasts,
And come to port
Bedecked with a victor's hasty-gathered loot,
The unfamiliar flotsam of strange depths
Unravished until now!

Only when I have drunk of you
Do I, with passionate surety, accept
The puzzling pattern of my chartless course
As something heaven-designed.
Only when I stand near
The altar where you heap your offering
Of oddly-tangled sheaves —
Tares with your wheat,
Poppies of blood, and vines
That strangle when a hand too covetous
Would pluck their blossoms —
Only when I see ascending high
The flame-streaked smoke of your enkindled soul,
Dare I, with heartened spirit, mount the steps
Of my dishevelled temple, and in prayer
Ask God to look upon *my* offering,
Chaos, bewilderment, resurgent thoughts
Put daily to the torch —
My sacrifice!

SINGING RIVER

Within the hillside I began.
Before I knew the light I deeply slept
Beneath the mountain's brooding mother-breast.
I know not how I came there; I believe
My mother must have drawn me from the clouds,
And windstorms, must have drunk me from the mists
That filleted and kissed her lovely head,
Breathed of me in her thick and spicy pines,
And colored me with prisms crystalline
From all the suns and moons she gazed upon.

From buried fountains in her heart I sprang,
My song the fluting of the timid brook,
Where pale fronds fringed and leaned caressingly,
Where once a doe and eaglet came to drink.
From sunny pools that musically dript
To shadow-mottled sands I hasted on
With rhythmic plashing as my eddies grew,
Until within a sudden, impetuous gorge
I whirled and leapt cascading to the plain,
My mother's arms relaxing from me whilst
I freed me from her honey-flowered lap.

SINGING RIVER

My song to mightier volume rushes now,
Telling of tasks and service greatly done.
I chant of waterwheels and murky towns,
Of high-spun bridges and of plowing craft.
I bear upon my sinews, flowing swift,
The burden of that ceaseless intercourse.
I gather stains that are not of myself,
The wheel that churns me does not choke my pulse,
My song swells out and I am not dismayed.
My spirit listens and I faintly hear
Other far voices flowing into mine.

My theme grows thunderous and my urge immense,
My surface more majestic; on my bed
I feel the seagrass growing, and I sing
With slow awakening knowledge of my goal.
I feel a salty freshness in my veins,
And in my throat strange cleansing like a tide.
I gain a sense of my profundity —
An ecstasy of limitless estate.
Long-dreamed-of harmonies to which my song
Has been a prelude and a prophecy
Engulf me, merging all my melody
To endless heave and surging of the sea.

And now a measureless tranquillity,
Freedom, and utter purity are mine.
Now is it given me — although my voice
Is lost in the welcome of the shouting waves,

SINGING RIVER

Lost in the dissolving laughter of the sea —
To know with surety but these two things:
That as a separate life I am no more,
But tasting many lives in one so vast
That confines are unthinkable. And this,
That from this warm immensity I shall
Return through all eternity to sing
Of my hill-mother's arms and cradling breast,
To sing of voyaging, of gradual growth,
Of finding that, in all my widening ways,
A mighty love had led me from the first,
Summoning me from ageless shaggy hills,
Shaping my course until I knew myself
A river liberated unto life,
Partaker of a rapture none may win
Save from the unlocking hand we call our death.

THE CONVALESCENT

From where I sit and watch, she looks
So feather-light upon her bed.

Her breast so delicate and small,
It scarcely seems to rise and fall
Beneath the lightly woven shawl.

Yet they have brought her back to life,
Almost they brought her from the dead.

Her fingers, slim and fluttering,
Pluck softly at the covering,
Pluck at my heart past uttering.

From where I sit and watch, she looks
So little, gentle, so betrayed.

Will she call out for that wee thing
That slipped into the enshadowing,
That could not stay for mothering?

COMPENSATION

You are not gone. I find you everywhere;
In every fragrance trembling on the air,
In every color that you loved to wear,
I find you there.

Each melody you sang, each tale you knew,
The paths we traced together, and the blue
Reflected in the willowed pool, renew
The thought of you.

I must not grieve. I must be sure the clear
White dawn is but a sign of you, nor fear
Lest sometime, in a sweet, uncounted year,
I'll find you, dear.

A TIMID LOVER

I'd like to make a song to you,
A song so witching sweet and true
That even the least atune with love
Would, half-attending, hear it through.

The song lies sleeping in my heart;
I guard its slumber without rest;
For when it stirs I am afraid
And lay my hand upon my breast.

I hush it off because I know
It *is* so witching sweet and true;
I could not bear to give it life
Unless you'd let it live with you.

DEFECTION

As the leaf drops from the tree
So parts my thought from thee,
And an exaltation new
Of my freedom thrills me through,
Sends me questing fortunes new.

Yet how brief this liberty!
Falls the leaf but 'neath the tree,
Flits my thought but back to thee
When 't has tasted truancy,
Wearied of wild Romany.

Leaves go dancing down the lane,
Breezes blow them back again.
I, with rover's joy replete,
Seek my old place at thy feet,
Rest contented at thy feet.

THE LIE

As from some rayless cavern of the mind,
Wherein misshapen thoughts might breed their kind,
A lie — blinking and hideous in the sun —
Crawled suddenly from out the sable folds
That robed a woman I had held most rare.
I gasped, half-reaching to destroy the thing
She'd given such strange asylum to. Whereon,
Meeting her eyes, I saw not fear, nor shame,
Nor loathing of the hateful presence there,
But such a challenge to molest it not
As only parenthood can put in eyes.

Such looks are dizzy with eternity.
In such — the measure of an indrawn breath —
There may pass out forever from the heart
An offended host of glorious, gleaming wings.
I stared and stared, and then — I looked away.
Her face had vanished in a blinding cloud,
Mist of my tears on my hot anger fallen.
I heard the sable robe's receding swish,
The small, metallic clang of gauds she wore,
And finally the silence, swallowing up
Those insolents of sound.

THE LIE

Then gratefully,
As if it knew the mocking footfall gone,
The stricken air became once more endued
With freshness that revived my shaken pulse.
I breathed again, I shook the nightmare off,
Thought even to rid me of its memory,
And heal with laughter what my soul had seen.
But, as I turned to go, a loathsome shape
Reared itself horridly from out the grass
And sped before me in the path that she
Who'd sheltered it, had taken just before.

Then was it borne upon me that this hour
Of disenchantment had been big with doom.
That which had come of it, and had escaped
To soil the world, would banefully fare on
Unscathed, unbridled, fattening to its prime;
That it would viciously complete the round
Of victims in its cycle of deceit,
Its last ironical repast achieved
When she who gave it birth should fall its prey,
O'ertaken by the thing she left behind,
Blinking and hideous in the sun — the lie.

THE ENEMY

You shall not come between me and the light,
You shall not block the path my soul has set.
Though I must lift and bear you all the way,
Though I must seize and bind you to my side,
I'll wear you as the warrior wears his shield;
You shall not come between me and the light.

As, at the last, my brother you shall be,
We shall go on together till the end.
Though you may strike, and, striking, see me fall,
Though you escape me for a certain space,
I shall arise and overtake your feet,
For at the last my brother you shall be.

All men are greater than the deeds they do.
My love is greater than your utmost hate.
Though each may struggle in his separate cause,
Though we be blind to understand the fray,
We shall achieve our brotherhood at last,
For men are greater than the deeds men do.

SIEGE

**At night, pale thoughts of you assail my sleep,
Softly besieging, like these futile wings
Of frail white moths that flutter in defeat
Against my window-pane; vague, thwarted things!**

IN WHITE SAMITE

I thank thee, dear, for all thou hast not given,
For all the sayings thou hast left unsaid;
Thou'st loved me with thy silence and thy shunning
And I — I've loved my dream of thee instead.

Still we have loved — have hungered for each other,
Have trod alone — and this, for love's dread sake;
Never to prove love's measure, lest it fail us,
Never to know — and this, lest one heart break!

TO HAPPINESS

Though I pursue you fondly,
 (And that's as it should be)
You're just one step beyond me —
 One step 'twixt you and me.

Wings, I would not o'ertake you,
 (The world's as I'd have it wag)
My clumsy touch might break you —
 I pray you, do not lag!

MIRAGE

I see you as I saw you then. The sky
Was luminous behind you, and the hills
Were purple as the asters in your arms,
And shadow-sweet as autumn wine that fills
October's beaker to its golden rim.

A bronzèd bramble clinging to your skirt,
Adown the dusty, leaf-red road you came,
With scarf of misty river-green, and hair
Loose-caught and smould'ring with the sunset flame
And leaping like the torch of Phaeton.

I see you as I saw you then. The sky
Was luminous behind you, and your eyes
Were purple as the asters in your arms,
And shadow-sweet as autumn dreams that rise
Unbidden on the heart of loneliness.

**HUMMINGBIRDS
AND THE HOUSE OF CROESUS**
(An Impression of Santa Barbara)

On the hill the house of Croesus,
Here below — an aloe tree
With innumerable winged creatures
Sipping from it ceaselessly;

Glancing, darting, chittering gaily
As they probe each honeyed cell,
In an iridescent rapture
Throbbing in the sunlight's spell.

On the hill the house of Croesus
And upon its lordly roof
Blinks contentedly a lizard
On his glistening tile aloof.

On the hill the house of Croesus,
Here below an aloe-tree,
And an air wingfilled with music
For the listening heart of me.

THE SMILING MESA

I have been too long in the sunland,
Too long away from the shade.
I have gazed at a face that smiled and smiled
Till it drove me stark afraid.

But here whole days are soft with mist,
Like pitying eyes. My fears,
And the smarts of the sunland's scorching kiss,
Are healed by their cooling tears.

ONE ONLY

Many keys shall strive to turn the lock of thy heart,
O most fugitive and fair beyond men's dreams —
But only one shall slide the bolt on its delicate secret
hinge.

Many lands shall unroll their vistas of beauty before
thee,
O wistful-eyed and eager-footed child —
But to one only shalt thou turn in the years of thy
crimson sunset.

TO ONE TOO COMPASSIONATE

Give not thy breast to suckle stillborn hopes,
 (None drain as they, for all they be so pale)
Unless to thine own heart thou hast grown cold.
Nor let thy roof give shelter to regrets;
Not ripeness to thy house, but swift decay
Follows their presence, as the damp spreads mould.

FETTERED

**Why drag a captive phantom at thy heels
To twitch the robe of thy felicity?
Why put a ball and shackle on the past
When it is but a wraith none sees but thee?**

A LOVER'S TRILOGY

I

MAGNIFICAT

Now, beholding you, is heaven thrown wide!
Now, beholding you, do my eyes drink from the spring
of eternity!
Now, beholding you, life has meaning, completeness,
goodness!

Only at certain times may I see you,
But the times between are filled with your image;
And were I never to see you again
There could be no death for me,
For death is only to have missed the secret, the essence,
of life.

Whenever, now, my eyelids close upon this earth where
beauty walks,
I shall fall asleep knowing the eternal truth of beauty;
Knowing that when I wake again, and again, a million
times again,
I shall see beauty, the one imperishable thing!

A LOVER'S TRILOGY

To die an eternal gainer, satisfied,
Possessor of the fact that there *is* ONE MOST BEAUTIFUL,
Is not to die at all.
It is only to have, for a little while, surcease of beauty;
To rest, in smiling, dream-hung night,
Before our eyes meet the next time, and the next!

I am not grateful for anything but beauty.
I shall never sing again of anything but beauty.
My world — God's world — shall contain nothing but
 beauty.
Pain, harshness, cruelty, glory, adventure, energy —
They are but scribblings on the slate.
Rub them all out!
And in their place write in letters of fire:
"I have found beauty!
I am on my knees before beauty!
I am grateful, with unending gratitude, to my God of
 beauty!"

The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of absolute
 beauty.
In mortals, the measure of love is but that strong
 capacity
To comprehend what is beautiful.
Now, because you are all that beauty can be,
Do I know myself a little child,
With nothing of worth or purpose
Save that I love you.

A LOVER'S TRILOGY

Because I know this, at last,
Is to have entered — a little child — into the kingdom
of heaven.

God be thanked, I have beheld you in the flesh!
God be thanked, God be thanked!

Beholding you, is heaven thrown wide!
Beholding you, my eyes drink from the spring of
eternity!
Beholding you, life has meaning, completeness, good-
ness!

II

THE BELOVED

Out of many lonely hours, my beloved,
Out of the weaving and the unwinding,
The flowering and the fading of many hours,
You have come to me.

Through all those lonely hours
The gods were making you, my beloved;
And all the while
That they were plotting the beauty of you,
The curve of your brow,
The grace of you,
The blue fire of your eye,
The pout of your lip,
The excellence of your small strong hand,

A LOVER'S TRILOGY

The hidden wonder of your laugh,
I too lay plotting.

Above all, I *longed* for you.
You became my vigil and my adventure,
My cue and my apology,
My trust and my torment;
For you were,
Through the unending hours,
The yet-unrecognized,
The vision unfulfilled;
And that there really *was* a you,
I had come utterly to disbelieve.

Then suddenly,
When every door had closed,
When every dream had dwindled,
When every plot had failed,
You appeared.
You were *there*,
At the very end of the journey,
Before me;
And my soul sprang into my eyes
To salute you!

Wherever you are
There is music, with its echoes of romance,
Like the widening ripples of a moonlit wake at sea.

A LOVER'S TRILOGY

Wherever you are
The current of the heart
Glides in a gentle enchanting rhythm;
Yet with your coming
Is the joy of impetuosity,
And with your departure
Is the sweetness of deliberation.
I hold you to my breast, and thank God for you.

III

ABSENCE

You have hidden yourself away,
Among your woods and your fields,
The beautiful wild places your soul loves.

You have taken the sunshine with you.
You have left me the dark, and stillness.
But the dark is odorous with sweet memory,
And I can plunge my thought into it
As I would bury my face in a great cool cluster
Of velvety dew-gemmed black pansies.

And the stillness! It is like a goblet
Slowly filling again during your absence,
Every moment a colorless drop
Brimming it with longing for your return.

A LOVER'S TRILOGY

The darkness and the stillness, they are good.
The dew of the pansies against my cheek
Shall be my only tears. The passing moments,
Pouring their songless stream into the beaker of silence,
Shall be my only heart-throbs.

I shall fling a fillet of dark flowers
About your shoulders, oh my darling,
When you come back to me.
And I shall hold my brimming chalice out to you to
quaff
When you return, my longed-for darling.

But at the thought of your eyes —
Their startling light, their glory —
I feel the unworthiness of my dusky blossoms.
My fingers, that have woven them,
Shall let slip the trembling coronal
And shall clasp your neck untrammelled, unrestrained,
And the clear cup of long waiting, of patient filling,
When my lips have found yours,
Shall tumble unheeded to the ground.

THE LIFE BETWEEN

Think thou of this, dear heart, when I shall be
Not with thee as today, my hand in thine —
That, wheresoe'er I am, and thou still here,
That, whatsoe'er I do, and thou not near,
I shall not count it heaven until thy kiss
Shall end my waiting. Love, remember this.

Think thou of this, my blessèd, when God's will
Divides us. I shall have but gone before
That His hand may from this poor clay you see
Mould me to something worthier of thee;
And I shall welcome fire and count it bliss
To purge my soul for thee! Remember this.

Think thou of this, sweetheart, when on thy soul
At last shall fall the shadow of thine end;
That, from the nearest borderland beyond,
Mine arms, outstretched, shall clasp thee, and the bond
Of lips and eyes shall live again nor miss
Its olden sweetness. Yea, God grants love this.

PAN IN HIDING

Let me have music unpremeditate,
Not played with obvious art, too close at hand.
Let me hear lilting strains borne from afar,
As in a dream of some forgotten land;
Melodies made mysteriously sweet
Through softly buffeting boughs — as when you near
In greenening forest-aisles a singing stream
Whose chant comes fitfully upon the air
At whimsy of stray winds that rise and sink
In playful vagrancy along its brink.

How all the pent and city-stagnant thoughts
Fall captive to such lulling witchery,
Leaving the mind unshackled and the heart
Expectant, as if some familiar voice,
Faintly hallooing out of springtimes lost,
Had sought a wordless summons to impart.

Instead of in a huge and garish hall
Where, underneath a blaze of spurious light,
Great throngs sit through a program patiently,
I find my spirit soars to star-tracked height —
Holding the meanest room romantic
With rare enchantment — when, by merest chance

PAN IN HIDING

Of window open on the dark, in drifts
Harmony that does hush all utterance,
Freed from a cello by quick hands that ply
In some unknown high chamber neath the sky.

How all the pent and city-stagnant thoughts
Are touched to rainbow by the ensorcelling sounds,
And how the thirster, when such rain sifts down,
Is conscious of a freshening in his brain,
As if an orchard breeze had found its way
Into the long gray canyons of the town.

To him who once — afield — has heard sweet stops
Of rustic piping played in vales aloof,
Or passage cry of birds, or grazing bell,
No orchestra beneath theatric roof,
No virtuoso facing footlight glare
Can so illumine the altars of his thought
As when, unprompted, from some night-bird's breast
A burst of passion, uncontrolled, untaught,
Kindles the drowsy pulses of the night
Like a nomadic meteor's argent flight!

How all the pent and city-stagnant thoughts
Sink soundless like the heavy lees of wine,
Leaving a pure ambrosia in the cup —
The spirit's chalice; which, when it o'erbrims,
Pours its *largesse* of joy, new chinkling coins,
Into the heart, and fills its alms-bowl up!

PERVERSITY

I know a happiness that some call strange,
The happiness of being in the dark —
Alone in the rich, breathing, peopled dark.

I know a grief that some have called profane,
The grief of being in the searing sun,
Surrounded by the unseeing, sunstruck crowd.

CAPRI

Enchanting, and thyself enchanted still
Since first upon thy shore the sirens' song
Broke magically and was borne along
Upon a thousand inlet waves to thrill
The grotto's heart — so shalt thou be
Until the end of time. Thou art the home
Of vanished majesty, a golden tome
Whose pages breathe a proud antiquity.
Once thou didst glance and gleam with Roman towers,
Once knew the Saracen heel, once felt the rod
Of tawny Barbarossa. Tranquil now
Thou liest dreaming through the peaceful hours
The while thy peasants toil where Caesar trod
And tend with songs the vine upon thy brow.

ANACAPRI

The white narcissus, swaying on the breeze,
 Bends from its niche unreachable and wafts
 The scent of time-old sweetness that he quaffs
Who sips today beneath the olive trees.
Some loitering goddess at the close of day,
 To ease her of the circling gems she wore,
 Has laid her crown upon yon distant shore.
See how it jewels all the darkening bay!
From hidden gardens on this isle of dream
 An echo of a song comes sweet and slow.
The sea from amber melts to dappled fawn,
From fawn to scattered primrose — gleam on gleam.
A plash of oars comes up from far below,
Stirs the soft air a moment, and is gone.

“ASK OF ME NOT MY STRENGTH”

Ask of me not my strength to match with thine —
The strength that lies in cunning nimble thought,
For what was worthiest in me, though wrought
In darkness, gave I thee with the first sign
Of love between us, and the gift was mine
Of heart and soul in one great rapture caught,
Of tears and smiles into strange union brought.
O Love, a poor return for the divine
Sweet touch thy claiming hand made known to me!
Yet now that I have learned all that thou art
Shall I not praise my inefficiency,
My poverty of light, my weaker part,
Since in exchange for these thou couldst to me
Entrust thy great, thy glorious childlike heart.

TRAVAIL

Which one of us, I wonder, could we lift
The burden of nights vigilant, the dread
Of unhealed disappointments, unsoothed frights,
Of patience worn to naked, nerveless thread —
Which one of us, I wonder, running free,
Loosed of our cares, would not a-sudden stop
And falter at the gates of liberty.

Lacking the well-known weight we learned to bear
Hearing the call of one we loved the best,
Missing the clasp of hands dependent still,
Fearing, for need of us, they might not rest —
Would we not, yearning, catch the burden up
And clasp it on again with tender cries,
Thankful 'twere given us to drain the cup?

NIGHT AND THE READER

Painting the sombre shadows where they fall,
Until the room is tapestried and warm
And quaintly peopled as with many a form
Passing in dim procession on the wall,
A russet-petaled lamp glows autumn-ripe.

The hour is rich with silence, save the soft
Recurrent bubble of a meerschaum pipe
That sends thin, amethystine webs aloft
To drift in pungent dust upon the dark.

A curtain by the open window sways
And flutters outward toward the empty park
That sleeps moon-gilded in the autumn haze.

Tolls midnight. With a half-reluctant sigh
A page is gently turned, the book put by.

TWO MASTERS

Great Love, I sought to follow thee, to shun
Only such creatures as — unlike to thee —
Had lifted up their souls to vanity
Or sworn deceitfully. And yet I won
For this no smile from thee as recompense
But rather each new day marked more and more
Estrangement from thee. I heard door on door
Close ponderously between us, 'til the sense
Of loneliness and failure was complete.
Then probed I my soul's shrine for cause of it
And found two altars where but one should be.
Alas! Thine, Love, which should have been
decked sweet,
Stood bare and flameless, while the other, lit
To hatred of thy foes, burned merrily!

AFTER THE AUCTION

Under the spell of things you used to love,
I could not feel that it was well with you
When death gave scattering hand to all you owned
And to a vulturous world your treasures threw.
Would it not pain you that some well-loved book
Had fall'n to coarse, uncomprehending hands?
Was it not sacrilege that arms less fair
Should feel the clinging of these jewelled bands?
Then to me, sorrowing, came answer clear,
Healing the havoc of hurt memories:
"You who delighted in my treasures small
Think of me joying without bond or care.
Know that no part of me remains in these.
Speak of me greatly, as possessing all!"

CEDARS AT MONTEREY

When windows give upon a lawn — as these —
Stupendous with majestic, shadowy trees,
 I cannot help but feel that — gazing out
 Upon such splendor tapestried about —
Even the paltriest mind, housed briefly here,
Must find all worldly longings disappear
 And yield itself, abased, at beauty's shrine;
 Some hidden fount of strange, exotic wine
Must flood its long-dried channels of delight
And probe a nameless rapture at the sight
 Of mighty cedars, dreaming in the wind.
 What songs awake, what legends prick the mind,
Of Puck and Pan and dryad-haunted trees,
When windows give upon a lawn, as these!

DEIRDRE

She is a creature of a fair
Unclouded sky, a vessel rare
Wherein the elemental fire and snow
By cunning alchemy are blent. This one
Is Deirdre — all a woman, all a child,
All to be loved. Yet she is wild
As wood nymphs are, shy without fear,
With eyes of wonder, and elusive foot,
A lip where laughter nestles, and a breast
Heaving to faintest music. She is blest
Beyond her kind, for in her slender hands
She bears the gift of sweet encouragement
And they who once the wearier way have trod
Find in her their desire, the smile of God.

LOVE ME WITH ALL THY TEARS

Love me with all thy tears. To those who know
No favor deeper than thy smile, to them
Give what thou wilt of smiling words. I ask
A dearer thing. It is that thou make mine
Thy hours of pain. Do thou to me unmask
The agonies that love accounts divine.

Love me with all thy tears. There can no joy
In this strange world make up one-half the sum
That sorrow doth towards rare companionship.
The grief-choked vows, unuttered, nearest lie
To love's own shrine, — nor holds the lip
In song one-half it breathes into a sigh.

Love me with all thy tears. Then shall my soul
Reach out to thee and know thee from the rest.
Let me but find thee through my blinding tears,
When thy soul too some white-faced misery sees;
Let me but share thy broken hopes, thy fears;
My heart — it shall be satisfied with these.

SEDITION

There is one who moves with deadly, fawning foot.
All day, all night, she pickets crowded paths
And whiningly proclaims her bandaged eyes,
The box for offerings strung around her neck.
She taps along the curb with groping stick,
Chicanery's signal to commiserate,
The drumbeat of the knave and criminal.

Or, in a sleeker guise, with mien sedate,
Ingratiating, owlishly informed,
Over the teacups and in huge bazaars
She spreads her smoke barrage of noxious fears.
Equivocation and a hint of tears
Mask her grim message, yet diffuse its taint.
Monotonously one taut string she plucks —
Reluctance that we lose our manhood's flower —
Poltroonery's thesis ever since the palm
Of Midas bore, within its cozening touch,
The sleeping-sickness of the over-fed,
The smug security of padded lives.

Professing pity for his ignorance,
Wonder and pain at his credulity,

SEDITION

She strokes the long ears of her ravished dupe;
Urges good Bottom that he close his eyes
To cloaked incendiary, stabbing danger home,
And wink with her at crawling menaces
Rising with sea-bed slime upon their snouts.

She haunts and hungrily observes the men
And women who are disappointment's prey,
Sterile, like shell-holes,
Like moon-craters, quenched,
With souls that sleep the awful, menacing sleep
Of things inflammable and tindery.
Therein she pours her swift libation — hate,
And when their wicks are saturate and swoll'n,
Her arm darts forward with its licking torch.

“Now dance for me, you pretty flames! Now leap,
You riotous, unruly fires! Behold
The priestess of your saturnalia! Now
To your merry music and your yellow sparks,
Leaping aloft to sear the seraph-eyed,
I whirl me to your bellowing bacchanale!
I dance! I dance! I dance!”

The altar seethes.

Malevolence, with savage shout, receives
The homage of his devotees, until
In the forlornest vale of hell there rings
The echo of their spent insanity.

FROM ONE APART

The skies shall smile to greet thy gaze,
But I must stand apart;
Yet I shall feel thy presence, too,
And all thou art,
And all thou art!

The rain shall fall upon thy cheek,
The snows upon thy heart,
Yet I shall love thee to the end
For what thou art,
For what thou art!

AT THE CROSSROADS

I that am Sorrow called, bid thee farewell —
Yet, as I go, I would that thou shouldst see
Why I have journeyed at thy side so long,
Why, undesired, unbid, I clung to thee.

If I have proved a comrade silent, dire,
Let me now speak who erst was granite-lipped;
If I have leaned too gallingly my weight,
Let me restore to thee thy wings, joy-tipped!

If I have forced from thee some hard-wrung tears,
They, through a cunning alchemy I wield,
Served but the chemist's purpose, to transmute
To flashing steel thy dull and leaden shield.

Whilst we have climbed together, steep on steep,
(This was the charge laid on me from above)
All of thy future neath my cloak I bore;
Take from me now this earnest of my love.

For an old weakness that beset thee once
I give thee strength to bear a greater ill,

AT THE CROSSROADS

For an old terror that benumbed thy heart
I give thee courage and a newborn will.

For every tear shed selfishly I give
Forgetfulness of self, for every loss
A mind more calm, an eye to recognize
The artlessness of good, the masks of dross.

With these, here's understanding, so that thou
Mayst know and love thy brother passing well;
Comforting him, thou shalt remember me.
I, that am Sorrow called, bid thee farewell.

IMPORTUNATE

I am eager for winter to come
And fold its white arms 'round this home,
This tangled and flower-spent lawn.
I am eager for winter to come.

I am longing for winter to sing
In the thin-pencilled treetops, and bring
Sudden gusts down the chimney's wide throat.
I am longing for winter to sing.

I am homesick for lamplight and dreams,
For the firelog that flickers and gleams —
Pranking shadows that play on the wall.
I am homesick for lamplight and dreams.

LIFE

**Art at a distance stands to gaze;
Bent History writes at her feet;
Music close nestles to her heart,
Poesy — cheek to cheek.**

TOLL-GATE

Beauty is yours,
(Witness these unsleeping eyes of mine!)
Unmatched the timbre of your voice,
Patrician-fine.
I look, I listen,
Meanly then take toll.
“Pass on! Yet stay — I’d know, sir,
Have you declared a soul?”

A will imperious,
(Witness these my chains!)
Hands where passion sleeps
And power reigns.
I bend, I whisper
With ill-feigned control,
“Magnificent! And lacking only
One small thing, a living soul!”

TO A VIS-À-VIS

Now I never have spoken to you
And you never have spoken to me,
For the gods that dispose of these things
Have decreed that that never shall be.

But we've come a long way just the same
On the road only lovers can see,
Though I never have spoken to you
And you never have spoken to me.

There's a strange little room in my heart
With a door that leads only to you;
It's a magical door, and it melts quite away
When our eyes meet and signal what's true.

Then out on the road of the heart
We may fare for that flash of an eye,
And the world is forgotten in wondrous content
And whole centuries seem to slip by.

But why ever we have to come back
Through that doorway that keeps us apart,

TO A VIS-À-VIS

Is the thing that bewilders us both
And the thing that is breaking my heart.

For I never have spoken to you,
And you never have spoken to me,
Since the gods that dispose of these things
Have decreed that that never shall be.

Yet we've come a long way just the same
On the road only lovers can see —
Though I never have spoken to you,
And you never have spoken to me!

TO A VERY LITTLE BOY

My feet go forward every day —
The same old way, the same old way,
 But all the while, aye every mile,
 Aye all the weary, weary while,
My mind spins bridges back to where I lost the way
 that led to you!

My eyes behold me every day —
A little thinner, sadder, gray!
 But memory's eyes — they do not change.
 You do not come to disarrange
The you my memory looks upon — the distant, sweet,
 unchanging you!

PETITION

All that Love is no mortal heart can know,
And even knowing little, doubts it true.
One gift I ask of Love,
And that gift, you!

Love must be kinder than the dreams of men,
Yet dreams may yield the waiting heart its clue.
One gift I ask of Love,
And that gift, you!

Love must be generous if it be Love,
No boon refuse for which I sue.
One other gift I ask,
Let me belong to you!

AFTER READING WALT WHITMAN

Spirit within, reveal me to myself!
As truth around me is, so must it be
Within me. Spare no swift-rent veil, for I
Would know that truth which frees, and lets me claim
My fellows as the man Walt Whitman did,
Who drew them to his breast, then held them off
With hands that clung and blest; who called their grace,
Their glory and their foulness his, and knew
With Christ that love outweighs the heaviest sin.

How strong is borne your message to my soul,
That as I am, so *all*, in some degree;
That spirits toil in turmoil and unrest,
Seeking to fit together broken hopes
And memories of beautiful ideals.
O Source of All, uplift us to your heart!
Touch these our lips from murmuring to song.
Teach our slow tongues to rapture and exult,
Our stubborn wills to know your deep repose.

I see all lives as bubbles, lucent spheres
Pressing and striving upwards, what a throng!

AFTER READING WALT WHITMAN

They touch but momentarily the slightest part
Of their encircling mutual compassings.
They contact only to withdraw again
And separately pursue their given course.

How fearsomely we guard the perfect globe
We think contains our individual self!
And that explored, how ceaseless is the urge
To give the borrowed vessel back again
And let the fluid soul it held leap forth
Free to rejoin its natural element.

Each day this orb of self, revolving, wounds
And tortures me within its opaque shell.
I faint within my confines, and I beat
My hampered wings against captivity.

I know the prison is a brittle thing.
I know that I shall rend it. All the forms
That echo senseless laws, rebuffing love,
Shall cease for me. I shall emerge and know
My brother, and this darkling loneliness
Will be a dream forever passed away.

THE CUP OF HEMLOCK

The tragic day was not when you were cruel,
For in your bitterness I found a hint
At least of mounting flame. Nor was the day
A tragic one when finally you fell
Upon my breast, with eyes abashed, tear-blind,

The tragic day was when I saw not one
Of these high raptures — love, nor love's disdain,
But lolling in their place that deadly thing
With dull, blown eyelids — pale satiety,
The tragic day when you were simply — kind.

TO EROS — A PROTEST

Little god! Little god! Will you never be appeased?
Look you, the youths of all the world have brought
In your high honor offerings untold.
Why must you frown impatiently on these
And bid us fire the pulses of the old!

Little god! Little god! Will you never have done?
Look you, no living heart has e'er escaped
The tithe exacted, though reluctant torn.
Yet on these things you gaze indifferently.
"Make mine," you say, "the hearts of the unborn!"

POTENTIALITIES

Thoughts for my poems are like hidden nests;
A leaf turned back, a twig snap't, there they lie!
That they are secret is the joy that rests
And comforts me: that I may keep them hidden,
Knowing I may return when woods be still,
And coax the nestlings into life at will.

That they are mine to warm, and urge, and train
To spread their wings and utter notes of joy,
Mine to behold as bit by bit they gain
A plumage worthy of their empery,
This single rapture to my life belongs —
An endless brooding o'er my fledgeling songs.

HOURS OF NEW SUMMER

Clover tops are nodding beneath an opal noon.
A lark has darted upward, I'll be hearing from him soon.
In my heart a throbbing; in my head a soncy tune.
June — June!

Glinty moths are fluttering beneath a pollened moon.
Sleepless waves are pulsing to the rim of the lagoon.
In my heart a throbbing, in my head a soncy tune.
June — June!

PASTORALE

(Sonata I)

I heard Scarlatti played upstairs
And, dreaming here alone,
The dusk of this high-ceiled room
With golden rain. was strown.

The wall before me melted soft
Into a branchéd glade.
I heard the stamp of dancing faun
The while a shepherd played.

CLIFF'S EDGE

Here is the bowl of sunset;
Turn you west and see
Clouds like slender fantailed gold-fish
Swimming in an amber sea!

Here is the bowl of sunset;
Turn you east and see
Clouds like bears on a drifting ice-floe —
Pearl and lapis lazuli!

JULY GREEN

**Green on green! The short grass at my feet,
The clipped yew-hedge, the path of mortised stones,
Like bits of gray-green cloisonné deep sunk
In malachite. Beyond, the bronze-green tones
Of meadows burnished bright with clover heads;
Gold-green of willow sharp against a pine,
Silken blue-green of lengthening grain, and last
The far-off framing green of forest line.**

NIPPON FISHERMAN'S SONG

In a garden of Yoshida an old wistaria grows,
It winds along the red-arched bridge where Shira River
flows.

Ai, ai, korede sundal

I would that I were there —

In old Yoshida's garden where that purple flower blows.

In a garden of Yoshida an old wistaria clings
And twines around a bamboo gate where sweet Wakana
sings.

Ai, ai, korede sundal

Now laggard oars, leap on!

Wakana's caught and spun my thought to strange
enchanted things.

In silver-roofed Yoshida an old wistaria dreams
Of lovers young, and voices filtered faint through white
starbeams.

Ai, ai, korede sundal

Swift Shira, bear me on —

Wakana's voice is calling, where that old wistaria
dreams.

THE SHOP OF GOD

What did *you* pay, I wonder, as I sit
And think of the astounding bill we ran.
Somehow the thought strikes in most poignantly
That you were *always* reckoning the price,
Counting the cost and ever watching for
The hidden tag eventually to fall
From out the yards of shimmering cloth-of-gold
We measured off between us at God's shop.
How prodigal we were with loveliness,
Laughing and tugging at the endless bolt,
Each pulling opposite ways until our arms
Ached with the wealth of beauty that they held,
Letting the fringes trail and gather mud
As off we bore the plunder of those hours.

Perhaps the heart pays on the installment plan.
Cash down? Oh never! Rather drop by drop,
And keeps the wound well opened till 'tis purged.
And so, good trafficker in this great-mart,
Beware of what you buy, and when your eyes
Cling tempted to some fabric passing fair,
Pull over them that thinking-cap of yours —
Oh pull it well adown, and suffer not

THE SHOP OF GOD

The artful merchant to enlist your purse
Deeper than what will give one day of joy.

One day of joy! If you have had but one
To hoard unto your bosom all your life,
Then you are rich beyond the miser's dream.
Seek not to purchase what may fill your barns;
Press not with gold the skilful artisans
To build you housing for your fuller years;
All will collapse in dust about your ears
Except that one unpurchasable thing,
That day you travelled hand in hand with joy!

EX-IMPASSIONATA

**I would have no more loving, oh my love!
Give me disdain, great purging flames of it
To lift me fair from this engulfing pit
And leave my spirit where cool dawns are lit.**

**I would have no more loving, oh my love!
Give me neglect, great waves of cruelty
To wash me up from this enfolding sea
And leave me beached upon tranquillity.**

"SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON"

I know a wandering voice that swells and sinks
Upon the rise and falling of the wind,
Singing its message out of timeless space:

 "Love is remembering," and again it cries

 "Remembering is *love* — is all of love."

I know a wandering voice that swells and sinks
Upon the rise and falling of the wind,
Singing its message out of timeless space:

 "Death is forgetting," and again it cries,

 "Forgetting — that is all there is of death."

EDEN PRAIRIE

Little road to Eden Prairie
Shall I follow you again,
Where you wind through plumeey tamarack
And dip to sedgy glen?

Shall I see your dust-brown ribbon
Hem the summer-mantled hills
With their lakelets sewn like sequins
And their silver-threaded rills?

Shall I hear the great wind singing
Where the prairie bares its breast
To the kisses of Hyperion
As he rides into the west?

Shall the smoke-wreaths of the twilight
Weave their spell? Shall my heart bound
To the drumbeats of the little folk
That guard the reed-grown pond?

I shall weary for your wildness,
I shall weary, wondering when,
Little road to Eden Prairie,
I shall follow you again!

TO AN OLD BOKHARA

Dim ancient fabric spread upon my floor,
How in the moonrise like a floating rose
You lie impooled in silver! And how veiled,
As with the powdery blue that dusts a plum,
Your sleeping colors melt in soft repose!

I lean you o'er, as o'er a dappled bed
Of motley-pebbled brook whose mosaic tints
Gleam through the amber of autumnal stream.
I trace the faded pattern of your veins,
And dream of orient nights you left long since.

You felt perchance the marble of some mosque,
The print of holy feet. Or in the mart
At Shirabad, you flashed upon a youth
Who paid your price ungrudgingly, to spread
Your hues before the mistress of his heart.

Through some pale dawn of eastern bridal night
A lover to his lotus-lidded fair
Has sung, extolling her, and bidding you
Make for her feet a tiny garden plot
Of rosy petals, woven with matchless care.

TO AN OLD BOKHARA

Now in the moonlight on my polished floor
You speak to me of Oxus' golden spell,
River whose bosom may have borne a barge
That wore you, lustrous, on her curtained deck,
Your fringes trailing in the rippled swell.

Out of the old mysterious East you bring
Visions of Panja vale and Khanabad,
Plane-trees and pomegranates quivering in the air,
Girdling the water-towers of Kala Khum,
Mortar and stone in budding hawthorne clad.

Into the West your voiceless message comes,
A scroll of beauty from an ancient land
Where swift dark fingers conjure at a loom;
I close my eyes upon you — and the night
Echoes with weavers' songs of Samarkand!

EVENFALL

**Now to its arms the twilight spirit draws
The sunbeams that have danced here all day through.
Oh, take me in your arms a little while;
My heart, that danced with yours, would slumber too!**

COGNIZANCE

I know no headier wine for youth or age
Than silence — when the cup is shared by two;
No bullets surer of their mark than eyes
That, meeting, interchange the one word “You!”

MATER DOLOROSA

Of what avail the word when born too late,
When time to speak is past, forever fled!

I am the mother of a stillborn host
Of laggard, wingless thoughts, of crippled hopes,
Of longings held in leash until they've lost
Their birthright of desire, their christening fire.
I am the mother that must ceaseless mourn
Her broken darlings, her belated dears.

How beautiful my children are in death!
My nurslings, all too tardily embarked,
And one by one expiring in my arms!

They come to me on drowning floods of spring,
On searing breath from sandy, desolate wastes;
They come to me on moon rays from a world
Exhausted, pallid, dead beyond all dreams!

Most strange and proud and wistful are they ever,
And with such bitter beauty in their eyes,

MATER DOLOROSA

**For none of them but wear the shadowy wreath
Death placed upon their brows ere they were mine;
And none there are whose lips, alas, my kiss
Can redden into song or coax to mirth!**

**Of what avail the word when born too late!
Of what avail these tears,
Of what avail!**

TO CESIRA, DANCING

Thy motion doth bewitch the gazer's thought
When lightly to and fro thy footsteps pass,
Ev'n as a flower, that, swaying in the wind,
Weaveth its shadow's charm upon the grass.

INDIAN SUMMER

Strange I should seek again the woodland thicket
Where by your side so oft of old I'd fling me;
For, on the breeze that once, rose-heavy, fanned us,
Only a wing-tired bee droops by — to sting me!

VOX HUMANA

(With an orchestra at the Orangerie.)

There is something astir in this room,
Something awake and on wing,
Soaring above this great crowd,
Pulsing and throbbing beneath
This smoke-hidden roof with its lamps
Heavy-shaded and pendulous, twined
With a thick imitation of leaves.

The heartbroken hear it, the tired
And noise-sickened, weary of blare.
The soul of the satiate stirs,
It pierces and stabs where he dreams
Befuddled and futile and dull.
The lovers — they hear it! I see
Here an eye lighting strangely, a brow
Clearing suddenly, freed from its pain.
And there! What a wonderful look!
What a startled, uplifted young face,
Or old one, grown young for a breath
As if, on its rapturous flight,
A wing from high heaven had stooped
And brushed all the furrows away
Leaving the crimson of youth,
The high-mantling beauty of youth!

UNCOMFORTED

If, in the hours when I am most beset,
My hand could touch yours for the briefest space,
If I could brush aside the rising tears
Just long enough to see your gentle face,
What clearing of my sky, and what a crown
Of laughter undismayed, what victory
Were mine to know, if, in those hours beset,
My fears could meet with your philosophy.

A PRAYER

Angel of strength,
I need thee sore.
Come from thy fastness,
Wrap me o'er.
Let thy brave calm,
Like mantle wide,
Fall on my heart
And there abide.
Teach me the sweet
Control you use,
That I may not
Good patience lose.
My need is not
For power to do;
For quiet strength,
Angel, I sue.
Grant then thy peace —
That succor sure;
Strength to be weak,
Strength to endure.
Then, I believe,
Will my blind eyes

A PRAYER

See the great secret
In the skies;
That all is well
And good, not drear;
That paths were thorny
But through fear;
That tasks are glorious
And not tasks
That God grants all
To him that asks.

SONG

The hour is late and we have drifted far —
Far into the enchantment of the night;
The starlit maze of bloom upon the shore
Melts into one white line, and soon the wave
That bears us on shall hide that too from sight.

The hour is late, and see, a flock of dreams
Follow, all drowsy-winged, the wave where dips
Our shallop's prow. Ah, Sweet, sing on, for then
The bandit dreams will flee the beckoning dawn,
Nor hush my joy, the song upon thy lips.

FULFILLMENT

**The deepening sky, and then, a single star;
A wilderness of promise, then a flower;
World's silence everywhere, and then, thy voice;
In each, Eternity, and this one hour.**

BLOOD OF YOUTH

Think not to find the hiding place of winds
That toss thy tiny kite askew, nor ride
A-hunting for some breeze that blows aright
To fill the drooping pennons of thy pride.

Let life in thee be as a bell suspent,
That swings to every pulsing of the air,
Nor cavil if thy clapper's voice be harsh
Whilst others vibrate with a sound more rare.

LIFE SITS A-WAITING

There is an appointed place for thee, my striving soul,
When thou hast ceased to struggle on wings of thine
own making;
When thou hast laid aside the impatient chisel of thy
will,
Thy half-hewn deities for One forsaking. /

With fretful foolishness and foreboding hast thou built
A mighty dike against the onrushing years;
With laughter and with love must thou dissolve it
If thou wouldst taste of salt not born of tears.

IMPROMPTUS

Great raptures spring unheralded. Great boons
Come stealthily upon us, unforeseen.
Who shall presage the maple's first red leaf,
Or the first robin, ere the maple's green?

I WOULD NOT BARTER RUE FOR ROSE

**I would not barter rue for rose
If, in the culling of it,
The rue had brought our hearts more close
And so we'd learned to love it.**

**I would not change the days we've spent
In fair or cloudy weather,
Had all those days, the gay and sad,
Been spent, dear boy, together.**

**But oh, to live again the days
When we apart were faring!
I would those days had never been
That missed the joy of sharing.**

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